

Now is the lightest you will weigh all year

September 28 2016, by Katie Baildon



This is an image of a weight scale. Credit: CDC/Debora Cartagena

As swimsuit season wanes and the holiday season edges closer, Americans everywhere should take a moment to enjoy the current state of their waistline. For the average person, the time just before the start of the holiday season is the low point in an annual weight gain pattern that peaks during the holidays and takes nearly half a year to fully shed.

New research findings published Sept. 27 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* by Cornell Food and Brand Lab Director Brian Wansink and

colleagues from Tampere University of Technology of Finland analyze the wireless weigh-ins of nearly 3,000 individuals in three countries.

In the U.S., weight patterns begin rising at Thanksgiving and peak around Christmas and New Year's.

"We found that in the U.S., it isn't until after Easter, about a five-month period, that weight patterns even out," said Wansink, "Chances are, right now most Americans are at their lowest weight of the year."

The trend among the 1,781 American participants indicated a weight bump of 0.2 percent during Thanksgiving, and another 0.4 percent at Christmas. It takes about five months to lose those holiday pounds, with weights typically stabilizing from May to November before the cycle begins anew.

The study used scales that sent data over a Wi-Fi connection rather than requiring participants to self-report or visit a testing site for weigh-ins.

The researchers also analyzed yearly weight patterns of 760 German and 383 Japanese participants. Similar to their American counterparts, those in Germany weigh the most around Christmas, while those in Japan weigh the most during Golden Week, four major holidays in the spring. Each country also showed a peak in [weight gain](#) at New Year's.

"Everyone gains weight over the holidays – Americans, Germans, Japanese," said Wansink.

But, he said, an annual holiday ritual repeated at the start of the season could go a long way.

"Instead of making a New Year's resolution, make an October resolution," Wansink said. "It's easier to avoid holiday pounds than to

lose them after they happen."

More information: Elina E. Helander et al. Weight Gain over the Holidays in Three Countries, *New England Journal of Medicine* (2016). DOI: [10.1056/NEJMc1602012](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMc1602012)

Provided by Cornell University

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